



STRATEGIC INTELLIGENCE BRIEF

2022-02-04

'Freedom Convoy' Solidarity Activity – Update 1

The following is derived from multiple sources of information. Variable source reliability and credibility has been factored into assessment(s). Analytic confidence in this reporting is MODERATE. Judgments are based on credibly sourced and plausible information, but there is insufficient quality or corroboration to warrant a higher level of confidence.

Situation

Regional "Freedom Convoy" solidarity convoys (a.k.a. "Operation Bear Hug"), localized highway slowdowns, temporary barricades, and protest activities are anticipated to intensify throughout the weekend of 04-06 February 2022. Significant convoy activity is expected to converge on the ALBERTA LEGISLATURE on 05 February 2022. Localized attempts to resupply and/or reinforce the COUTTS BORDER CROSSING interference action remain probable.

Key Judgements

- Convoy, highway slowdown, and protest actions on Saturday 05 February 2022 are likely to occur with significantly larger turnout than previous events. Counter-protest activity is likely to become an additional aggravating factor, with increased potential for confrontations.
- Temporary convergence on mainstream media facilities has been included in some route planning.
- Local influencers in distinct regions are primarily responsible for spontaneously organizing supporters and participants in support of the ongoing COUTTS action and solidarity with the OTTAWA-focussed 'Freedom Convoy'. Repeat legislature-bound convoys have rallied around their original organizers, but there remains little indication of coordinated planning between these organizers.
- Solidarity actions will likely continue to be organized by members of a diverse and complex movement composed of individuals, online affinity groups, and coalitions that are formed and dissolve in response to changing conditions. Unlike a homogenous group with defined membership and leadership, the aggregate 'Freedom Convoy' movement is fluid and only sustains unified action based on a small set of common goals.
- Information regarding 5 February 2022 convoys intending to converge on the LEGISLATURE is continually changing. Root-level organizing will rapidly adapt relative to the proliferation of affective messaging* and perceptions of developing situations regarding COUTTS BORDER CROSSING and OTTAWA 'Freedom Convoy' activities.
- Regional support is being heavily catalyzed by the dismissive metanarratives† being associated to the OTTAWA 'Freedom Convoy' activities. Overly simplistic collectivist framing of participants in terms of racism, serious criminality, hate/bias/prejudice, and violent extremism appears to be fueling a collective conscience (or hive-like) response based on a set of shared beliefs, ideas, attitudes, and perceived knowledge. A 'Freedom Convoy' collective consciousness is fueling hive-minded solidarity behaviours by providing a sense of belonging and identity based upon a common cause of confronting the dismissive metanarratives being propagated by media and political actors.

* Affective message strategies are designed to invoke feelings and emotions.

† A metanarrative is an all-encompassing theme that seeks to unite smaller themes and individual stories.



Background

On 29 January 2022, regional solidarity convoys and protests were conducted to coincide with the convergence of nationwide “Freedom Convoy” (a.k.a. “Operation Bear Hug”) participants on Parliament Hill. These activities were organized spontaneously by regional affinity groups and localized individuals, following the movement’s loosely defined theme of abolishing public health orders (PHOs). Within Alberta, a convoy to the Alberta Legislature attracted approximately 9000 persons and 200 vehicles. A locally organized convoy converged on the Coutts/Sweetgrass Port of Entry, where protest activity developed into a blockade that has interfered with cross-border movement and local community access along Highway 4. Attempts to reinforce the Coutts area action, localized highway slowdowns, and temporary barricades have occur throughout Alberta since 29 January 2022.

Anticipated Activity – 04-05 February 2022

Alberta Legislature-Bound Convoys

Many of the anticipated 05 February 2022 convoys are duplicates of those that travelled to Edmonton on 29 January in support of the Ottawa-focused 'Freedom Convoy 2022'.

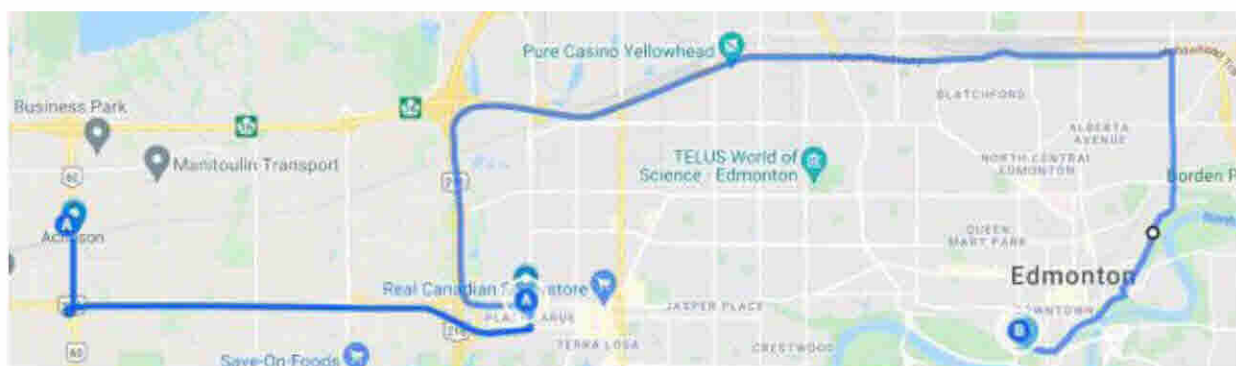
Stand United – Media is the Virus – Convoy from Alberta Legislature to CTV News¹

ALBERTA 4 LIBERTY has been a prominent organizer amongst the anti-PHO protest community in Alberta, and is currently advocating for a convoy from the ALBERTA LEGISLATURE to CTV News (18520 STONY PLAIN ROAD, EDMONTON), in line with the widespread belief that main stream media is complicit in the government's response to COVID-19.

Convoy to CTV then Alberta Legislature²

Social media planning indicates the group intends to depart from ACHESON at 10:30 hrs, bound for the LEGISLATURE grounds via CTV NEWS (18520 STONY PLAIN ROAD), with the intent to arrive at the LEGISLATURE at approximately 13:00 hrs.

Group organizers are identified as Emma J FRANK and Ken Te BOW.



Acheson via CTV Convoy

Edmonton Convoy 2022³

An EDMONTON-bound group intends to depart VERMILLION at approximately 08:00 hrs and VEGREVILLE at 09:30 hrs. Their goal is to arrive in NISKU at 10:30 hrs.

Once organized in NISKU, the organizers intend to allow the group to split up and join either the ANTHONY HENDAY slow-roll protest or join the protests being scheduled for downtown.



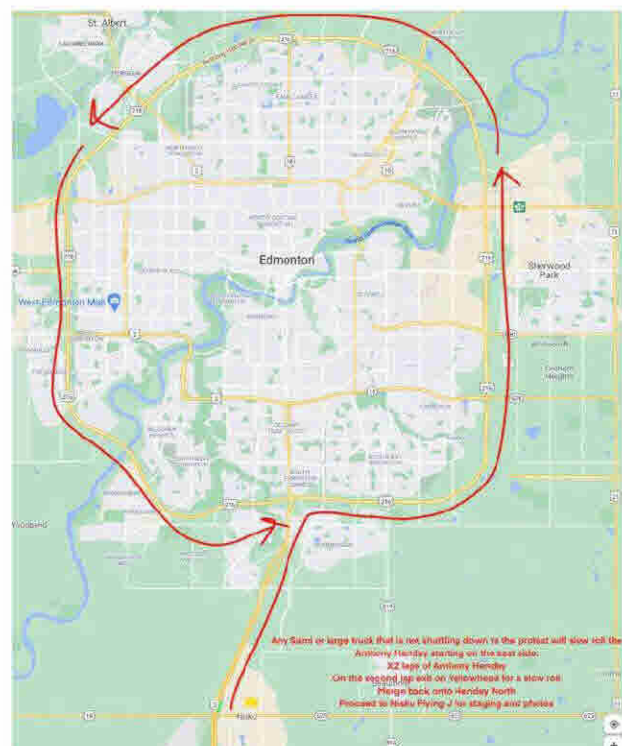
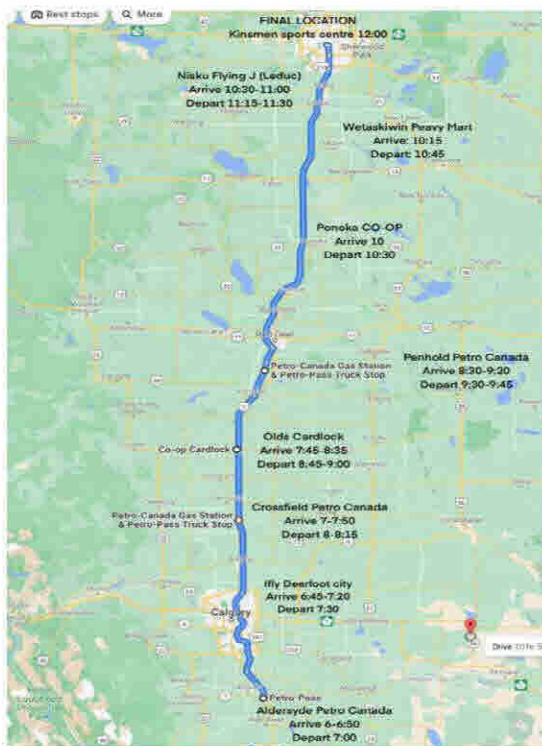
Alberta 2022 Legislature Slow Roll Convoy⁴

An EDMONTON-bound group is intending to depart from the ALDERSLYDE area, south of Calgary at 06:00 hrs, travelling through CROSSFIELD, OLDS, PENHOLD, PONOKA, WETASKIWIN and NISKU.

Their central point of meeting is again identified as the KINSMEN SPORTS CENTRE (9100 WALTERDALE HILL, Edmonton).

Planning maps on social media indicate the intent to simultaneously conduct a “slow-roll” counter-clockwise on the ANTHONY HENDAY for two laps before returning to NISKU for photos.

A social media account associated with an Emmalee RAIN, Melissa WILLCOTT, and Joshua NORRIS appear to be leading the organization of this particular event.



Alderslyde to Edmonton Route and Edmonton Plan



Barrhead Freedom Convoy⁵

And EDMONTON-bound convoy will be departing BARRHEAD at 09:30 hrs.

Unlike many of the other social media accounts organizing convoys, this has been restricted to private members – though group descriptions indicate a plan to replicate the 29 January convoy plan.

Update on our tentative plans for another Freedom Tour on Feb.5th -

1. We will stage at the same spot as last time. Southbound on the service road by the splash park and bowling alley. Hopefully we get to the end of town this time. Last time was getting close.
2. We will leave again at 930am sharp. Please support J's Place and Karen Knapp Ross from Karen's Custom Graphics for you decal needs. They have a number of different options for you already set up. As well as custom options.
3. We will head south on hwy 33 and from there go east on hwy 43. ****note**** this is a dangerous part of the tour. Please remain in the left lane once you are on 43 and watch your mirrors carefully. DO NOT switch to the right lane until it is safe to do so. Watch your mirrors please.
4. Whitecourt plans to join us at the junction of 33 and 43. They will follow us.
5. I intend to have a better rest area stop planned out for the pee'ers. Sorry, last time was kind of a gong show here.
6. After our rest area stop, we will merge onto the Henday again for some more Freedom noise making. We will again be using the right lane or center lane when there are 3 lanes. Counter clockwise around the city again. 2 laps again. At this point, we will disband and head into the city center how ever you see fit. Apparently I missed a good time down there last time so I think I'll be doing this. Anyone who wants to break off can do so at any time they please.

Localized Convoys

Freedom Convoy 2022 Fort McMurray⁶

A local group that helped organized a “mini-convoy” in FORT MCMURRAY is organizing a follow-up protest at the FORT MCMURRAY COURTHOUSE between 13:00 and 15:00 hrs.

Group organizers are identified as Shannie TROY, Justin CARTWRIGHT, and Connie SHIELDS.



Blockades and Slow-Rolls

Since 31 January 2022, calls for decentralized blockades or highway slowdowns have been spreading throughout Alberta. Using the keywords “Bear Hug” and “Farmers for Freedom”, supporters have promoted the idea of small blockades set up throughout the province on highways using trucks or farm implements. These ideas appear to have spread virally through social media and direct contact between supporters of the blockade(s).

Similar efforts have emerged elsewhere in the country, with port slowdowns on Canada’s coasts planned under “Mariners for Freedom” and further convoys planned for cities in Ontario.

Calgary Convoy Slow-Roll⁷

On 04 February, a Calgary-bound convoy was planned to depart from the HOME DEPOT on MCLEOD TRAIL at 07:00 hrs, prior to moving towards CITY HALL.



Operation Bearhug Calgary⁸⁹

Media reporting indicates a possible convoy in CALGARY commencing in BOWNESS in northwest CALGARY, which will make its way along 16 AVE. to 68 ST. in the northeast before returning to BOWNESS.

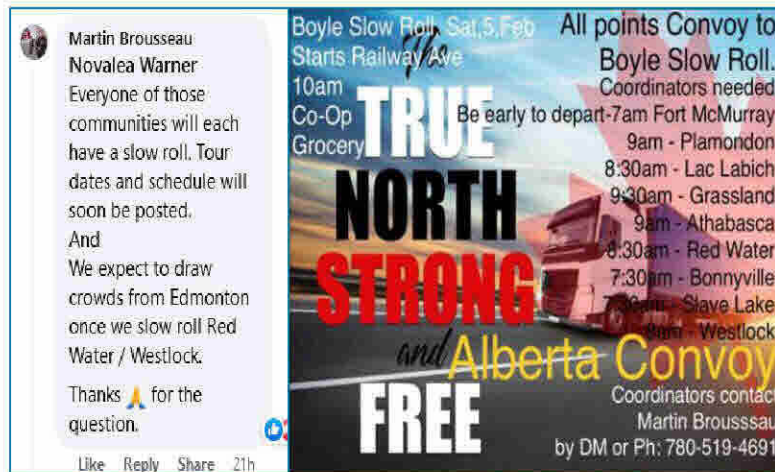
COMMENT: Media speculate that the slow-roll could impede traffic around the FOOTHILLS HOSPITAL and possibly create issues accessing the hospital. **COMMENT ENDS**

Boyle Slow Roll¹⁰

A FORT MCMURRAY-based group intends to depart Fort McMurray at approximately 07:00 hrs on 05 February 2022 to conduct a “slow-roll” through PLAMONDON, LAC LABICH, GRASSLAND, ATHABASCA, RED WATER, SLAVE LAKE, and WESTLOCK.



Within the social media discussions, apparent organizer Martin BROUSSEAU expects to attract further support and to draw crowds from the groups conducting protests in EDMONTON.



Barnwell-Edmonton Convoy

Law enforcement partners have reported the planning of an EDMONTON-bound convoy scheduled to depart from BARNWELL at 0900 on 05 February 2022. Instructions include a speed limit of 40km/h and direction to bring fuel.

COMMENT: This is likely in response to reports of fuel shortages identified at the Coutts blockade, which as requested community support for food and fuel as the events there continue.
COMMENT ENDS

Foothills Freedom Slow Roll¹¹

A truck convoy is planned for 06 February 2022, organizing at the SEAMAN STADIUM in OKOTOKS at 11:45 hrs organized by the FOOTHILLS FREEDOM RALLY. A subsequent 13:00 hrs rally at OLDE TOWN PLAZA in OKOTOKS also indicated. 42 people have indicated their intention of attending the convoy on social media.

The social media planning page suggests that Artur PAWLOWSKI is scheduled to attend the rally.¹²



General Assessment

There remain a large number of disparate groups that appear to be organizing convoys, rallies, and intermittent blockades and slow-roll protests independently of one another, resulting in fluid and inconsistent planning.

Similar to the Coutts blockade, leadership and organization of sympathetic convoys and blockades has been characterized by a lack of centralized leadership. Local influencers in distinct regions are primarily responsible for spontaneously organizing supporters and participants in support of the Coutts Border Crossing action and the Ottawa 'Freedom Convoy'.

Repeat legislature-bound convoys have rallied around their original organizers, but there remains little indication of coordinated planning between these organizers. As in the Coutts example, the convoys remain reflective of a *collective conscience movement* of like-minded, but independent actors who are working towards similar goals. These solidarity convoys continue to be organized by members of a diverse and complex movement composed of individuals, online affinity groups, and coalitions that are formed and dissolve in response to changing conditions. Unlike a homogenous group with defined membership and leadership, this movement fluid and only sustains unified action based on a small set of common goals.

As demonstrated on 29 January 2022, some LEGISLATURE-bound groups appear to be planning to use the ANTHONY HENDAY as the destination for the large trucks, with the intent of conducting a slow-roll protest while others have expressly stated their intent to enter EDMONTON city centre with large vehicles, likely with the intent of significant traffic disruption. There remains discussion of attempting to ensure that emergency and service vehicles are not impeded; however, given the generally poor levels of coordination and chaotic nature of previous protests this is unlikely to be successful, particularly within EDMONTON city centre.

Based on information available at this time, there are no outward indicators of planned violence. It remains possible that the chaotic planning and highly emotive nature of these protest could lead to outbursts of anger and impromptu expression of violent activity stemming from traffic disruptions and confusion surrounding the convoys as a whole. Frustration within the broader community, stemming from imagery of the events of OTTAWA, may combine with frustration and anger as a result of the continuous noise created by a large number of commercial vehicles and private vehicles honking their horns within city limits.

Convoy, blockade, highway slowdown, and protest actions on *Saturday, 05 February 2022* are likely to occur with significantly larger turnout than previous events. Protests by pedestrians and vehicle convoys within the cities of EDMONTON and CALGARY are likely to occur, but the quantity of attendees cannot be assessed with reasonable confidence at this time. Weekday blockade actions have been limited by the number of available participants, and the weekend is likely to provide more available and willing supporters.

There is little indication of organized counter-protest activity being planned at this time, but it is possible that individuals or affinity groups will attempt to disrupt the movement of vehicles and confront protest participants. The emergence of a coordinated counter-protest movement would become a catalyst factor that could increase temperature and the risk of confrontation.

Regional support is being heavily catalyzed by the dismissive metanarratives being associated to the Ottawa Freedom Convoy activities. Overly simplistic collectivist framing of participants in terms of racism, serious criminality, hate/bias/prejudice, and violent extremism appears to be fueling a collective conscience (or hive-like) response based on a set of shared beliefs, ideas, attitudes, and perceived knowledge. A 'Freedom Convoy' collective consciousness is fueling hive-minded solidarity behaviours by providing a sense of belonging and identity based upon a common cause of confronting the dismissive metanarratives being propagated by media and political actors.

Root-level organizing will rapidly adapt relative to the proliferation of affective messaging and perceptions of developing situations regarding COUTTS BORDER and OTTAWA 'Freedom Convoy' activities.



***** REPORT ENDS *****

- 1 <https://www.facebook.com/events/650356082817268>
- 2 <https://www.facebook.com/events/1390467068076121>
- 3 <https://www.facebook.com/Edmonton-Convoy-2022-100640075871146>
- 4 <https://www.facebook.com/events/1019577651983711>
- 5 <https://www.facebook.com/groups/1799593380244222>
- 6 <https://www.facebook.com/groups/4790902437684454>
- 7 <https://web.telegram.org/z/#-1608386075>
- 8 <https://calgary.citynews.ca/2022/02/02/calgary-convoy-protest-concerns/>
- 9 <https://twitter.com/PrairieFreedom/status/1489380081898119169/photo/1>
- 10 <https://www.facebook.com/photo/?fbid=379398680661127&set=gm.4911303202271533>
- 11 <https://www.facebook.com/events/456172469565276?ref=newsfeed>
- 12 <https://www.facebook.com/foothillsfreedomrally/photos/pcb.147339431046046/147339361046053/>

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